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## HOW TO FIGHT FEELINGS OF INVALIDITY ... AND WIN!

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Sometimes, we get into stints when our mental health isn't ideal. No matter how much we accomplish, no matter what we do, we just can't seem to feel proud, valued or worth the fight.

There are days when I can list my accomplishments and see the value in them, but I just can't get that to translate into any form of positive emotion. It's one thing to mentally recognize something, yet quite another to truly feel the joy I should be able to feel about it. Instead, I just feel down on myself. There's only so much time you can work for the wrong person or see others compare you to someone else before your sense of worth gets shot. For some, this can happen quickly. For others, it could take years, but eventually, it grates on most people. Especially in today's world, when we have been in a global crisis for years now, it can feel difficult to move forward. So, what do we do when our sense of self worth is shot? How can we fight those feelings of invalidity that we all experience from time to time?

For me, personally, when I'm feeling down, the most valuable tool I use to help transcend the negative thoughts has been meditation. Specifically, I've found that by picking up the Expand app and choosing a meditation exercise focused on gratitude, I can change my outlook and, with it, those feelings of invalidity.

It's almost a "fake it 'til you make it" situation for me. I find that by meditating I can, first, clear my mind, which will help me to push the bad feelings out. Then, by coming from a place of gratitude, I can recognize what I have to be thankful for and then turn those thoughts into solid feelings. For instance, each time I feel down, I begin an exercise where I list in my mind what I'm grateful for, and I live in each thought for a few seconds.

I'll mindfully focus on my breath. Then, I'll start listing what I'm grateful for. I'm grateful for my house. I'm grateful for my cats. I'm grateful for my dog, for my husband, that I get

to do what I love for a living, for the safe, blossoming community that I live in ... the list goes on.

As I state each thing that brings me joy and gratitude, I hold onto that specific thought for just a moment or two and visualize it and remember what about it makes me so happy. Naturally, as I hold onto and live into that thought, a feeling of joy emerges, however small. With that small spark of joy, I begin to feel gratitude. As I move onto the next item, this feeling builds up until, suddenly, I find myself happy, grateful and not just fighting with, but also pushing out, those feelings of invalidity. I finally win against the negative thoughts.

So, what might seem like a daunting task (fighting with strong negative feelings) becomes an easily accomplishable task when tackled one small step, one small thought of gratitude, at a time.

Some great meditation exercises that focus on gratitude that can be found in the Expand App are "Expressing Gratitude" and "Smile" by Marinda Stopforth.

We all have bad days. I trust that you, also, are able to stop your negative thoughts quickly and efficiently with meditation as you continue your journey. Meditation has been nothing but a blessing for me. I hope that my personal experiences into the world of meditation will help provide you with insights that lead you down the right path for you.